

The Land of Israel in the Parsha & Our Lives

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha

Parashat Vaera How Can We Merit to End the Current War in Ultimate Victory?

What Kind of Heritage Do I Wish to Bequeath to Our Offspring?

A long time has passed since my husband and I arrived from different corners of the earth and met in Jerusalem, the vortex of the world. Since then, we have built our lives and settled on a beautiful plot of land in the Land of Israel. Not a day goes by without us thanking Hashem for this *zechut* (privilege) to manage our homestead here in the Promised Land. What an honor to build our home on our treasured land, and engage in its upkeep, such as renovating, insulating, and painting it. Likewise, we delight in tending to our trees, vegetables, herbs, and flowers here on our own holy land portion. Although our patriarchs and matriarchs also tended the land of Israel – then called Canaan – they had not yet inherited the land, which Hashem had promised them, as a heritage for their children. Therefore, Avraham called himself a ‘foreigner- resident’ (*Bereishit* 23:4) when he needed to purchase the Machplah cave as a burial place for Sarah. Baruch Hashem through our soldiers’ blood, bravery, and tears the former land of Canaan and Palestine has now become our Land of Israel – the Jewish homeland – where we never again will have to be foreigners. My husband and I worked hard for our heritage in Israel, which we wish to bequeath to our children. Many of our friends have already written their will, but we have been hesitating, and now I know why. I just read an article by Rabbi Riskin about the difference between a *יְרוּשָׁה* / *yerusha* – ‘inheritance’ and *מורָשָׁה* / *morasha* – ‘heritage.’ Whereas most people’s Will is a *yerusha* – an inheritance that the children inherit without any strings attached, Hashem gave the Jewish people Israel as a *morasha* – a heritage – which is not only for the children themselves but will remain within the family for all future generations. Such a heirloom must be deserved, worked for, and maintained. The difference between a *yerusha* and a *morasha* is that the latter requires active involvement and participation. It can be compared to the difference between inheriting a sum of money or a family business. Receiving a *morasha* needs sweat, blood, and tears to maintain, keep going, and develop. So, I told my husband, “I want to leave my children not only with a *yerusha*, but with the *morasha* of our homestead, that they continue to tend and develop. I want our descendants to live on our land and pick the fruits of the trees we planted, for fruit-picking is actually work and effort.”

What is the Consequence of Moshe’s Complaint About the Intensified Hardship in Egypt?

The three most important things that Hashem bequeaths to His Chosen people must be acquired through hardships:

תלמוד בבלי ברכות ה' ע"א תניא, רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר: שלש מתנות טובות נתן הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל, וכולן לא נתנן אלא על ידי יסורים, אלו הן: תורה וארץ ישראל והעולם הבא:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, gave Israel three precious gifts, all of which were given only by means of suffering, [which purified Israel so that they may merit to receive them. These gifts are:] Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and the World-to-Come (*Babylonian Talmud, Berachot* 5a).

I believe that suffering can be transformed into effort and through Emunah faith) we can take on a self-imposed effort that will take the place of suffering. Let me explain. At the end of *Parashat Shemot* Moshe complains that since he followed Hashem’s instruction to tell Pharaoh to “Let my people go” the situation had gotten so much worse for the Israelites. (They now had to gather the straw on their own while still producing the same amount of bricks as beforehand). Thus, *Parashat Shemot* concludes with Moshe’s

complaint to Hashem: "Since I have come to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has harmed this people, and You have not saved Your people" (*Shemot* 5:23). This statement is the first cause that made Moshe lose the privilege of entering into the Land of Israel. Hashem responds to Moshe's complaint by telling him about the forthcoming Exodus from Egypt: "Hashem said to Moshe, 'Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a mighty hand he will send them out, and with a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land'" (*Shemot* 6:1). Eithin this promise of redemption there is an allusion to Moshe's punishment as Rashi explains.

What Character Flaw Caused Moshe to be Barred from Entering the Land of Israel?

NOW YOU WILL SEE - You have questioned My ways [of running the world, which is] unlike Avraham, to whom I said, "For in Yitzchak your seed shall be called" (*Bereishit* 21:12), and afterward I said to him, "Bring him up there for a burnt offering" (*Bereishit* 22:2), yet he did not question Me. Therefore, NOW YOU WILL SEE - What is done to Pharaoh you will see, but not what is done to the kings of the seven nations [a reference to the battles fought to conquer Canaan] when I bring the children of Israel into the land of Israel (Rashi, *Shemot* 6:1). In other words, Hashem reprimands Moshe for his complaint which expresses a lack of emunah compared to Avraham, who had to endure great hardships without questioning Hashem. Due to this lack of emunah, Moshe lost the privilege of joining the Israelites in conquering the seven Canaanite nations when they would (forty years later) enter the Promised Land. Although Moshe's slight lack of emunah stemmed from his great compassion and empathy for his people, there was still a minute element where he failed to look beyond the suffering of the moment and recognize that it was all part of the divine covenant. Through his immense care for the Israelites, he could see only what was immediately before him, namely that his intervention had resulted in a worsening of the Israelites' situation. Although Moshe's limited perspective stemmed from his deep identification with the pain of his people, nevertheless, G-d limited his perspective by cutting his life short; so that he wouldn't be able to enter the Promised Land and witness the Israelites' conquest. He who questioned the divine promise will not merit seeing its full realization (Based on Ilana Kurshan, *Parashat Vaera*). Whereas Moshe's complaint emanated from his lofty level of love for his fellow Jews, regular people in the midst of suffering unbeknownst to themselves naturally try to alleviate the suffering through complaining or blaming. This tendency stems all the way back to the first humans. It is a way of projecting the hardship that seems too hard to bear onto someone else. However, that usually never helps in the long run. We can learn from Moshe's complaint and its severe consequence that the best way to deal with hardships is through emunah. Strengthening our emunah in Hashem's goodness - and believing that in the end, even our current suffering will turn out for the best will help us get through the bumps on our way!

Acquiring the Land of Israel through the Effort of Emunah

ספר שמות פרק ו פסוק ח והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ אשר נשאתי את ידי לתת אתה לאברהם ליצחק וליעקוב
ונתתי אתה לכם מורשה אני השם:

"I will bring you to the land, concerning which I raised My hand to give to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya'acov, and I will give it to you as a heritage; I am Hashem" (*Shemot* 6:8).

The above verse gives me a lot of hope that Hashem will soon expand the boundaries of Eretz Yisrael according to His promise to Avraham "From the river of Egypt until the great river, the Euphrates River" (*Bereishit* 15:18). As Ramban explains "I have raised the strength of My arm to Myself that I will give them the Land" (Ramban, *Shemot* 6:8). However, our Torah verse also indicates that our efforts are what brings Hashem's oath into effect. Hashem swore that he would give us the land as a **מורשה**/*morasha* - 'heritage' rather than a **ירושה**/*yerusha* - 'inheritance.' The added letter mem in *morasha* is a grammatical sign of

intensity, for us to come into possession of a *morasha*, we must work for it. Thus, the Promised Land is acquired through suffering or effort. The effort of strengthening our emunah to have faith that everything will become better is the mildest way of acquiring Israel through suffering because overcoming our natural urge to complain – when things are hard like during this current war – is a way that we can take on the short-lived suffering of not following our negative inclination, but overcoming it through emunah, which will turn all the darkness into light. Israel's new 'anthem' is proof that Israelis today especially our brave soldiers are strengthening our emunah by singing at the top of our lungs: "Hashem, blessed be He, always loves me, and everything will always be good for me, and it will be even better and even better and it will always be only good for me!"